



Commission Meeting Minutes

The following are the minutes of the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission meeting. The meeting was held on Saturday, September 17, 2021. Washington City Community Center, 350 Community Center Drive, Washington, UT 84780

Note: A copy of meeting materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found on the Public Notice Website. The minutes may refer to the recording found on the Public Notice Website with the approximate number on the recording where an issue is being discussed.

Attendance - Commission Members

Chair, Utah Independent Redistricting Commission - Rex Facer
Commissioner Karen Hale
Commissioner Christine Durham
Commissioner Lyle Hillyard
Commissioner Jeff Baker
Commissioner William Thorne (virtually)
Commissioner Robert Bishop (virtually)

Attendance - Staff and Others in Attendance at Anchor Location:

Gordon Haight, Executive Director
Aly Escobar, Administrative Coordinator
Beau Bayless
Julianne Kidd
Sariah Morey
Joey Fica
Matt Cannon, Legal Counsel

Attendance – Public in Attendance:

Rob Latham, Fair Vote Utah
Sean Hemmersmeier, The Spectrum
Benjamin Fica
Patricia Hansen
Gary Hansen
Elaine Porter
Pat Jones
Kyle Friant, Better Boundaries
Katie Wright, Better Boundaries
Lexi Peery, KUER 90.1

I. Open House

At the start of the meeting, an open house was held to allow the public to view drafted maps.

II. Welcome – Chair Rex Facer

Chair Facer welcomed everyone to the meeting at 6:26 PM, and mentioned the commissioners' interest in hearing input from the people of Southern Utah. He also mentioned that the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission website - uirc.utah.gov, contained the drafted maps that were shown during the open house as well as links to the previous meetings.

III. Presentation: Redistricting Process – Rex Facer

Chair Facer moved to the next item and stated that he would explain some of the process of redistricting and how the commissioner functions.

He began by explaining that Proposition 4 in 2018, began the creation of the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission and after some compromise legislation in 2020 the commission was created. Chair Facer explained that the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission is an advisory commission to the Legislature and would be giving the Legislature three drafted Congressional, State House, State Senate, and State School Board maps.

Chair Facer then went on to explain the criteria to be used by the commission. More information about these criteria can be found here: <https://uirc.utah.gov/uirc-meeting/synopsis-criteria-and-standards/>

In this explanation, Chair Facer mentioned the requirements for equal populations as being the fundamental criteria as the commissioner works to create maps for the Utah Congressional seats, Utah House, Utah Senate, and State School Board. He presented the various population numbers for each map type. He mentioned that Washington County had grown at a faster rate than other areas, and so essentially to account for population numbers to remain equal some representation would shift into the areas that had the higher growth over the previous ten years.

Chair Facer then moved to explain the additional criteria adopted by the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission which can be found in the above link. In this explanation he touched on the importance of communities of interest, both as a way to ensure representation and to help the commissioners understand where the larger communities can be split. He also mentioned that the commissioners have decided not to consider political data as they map.

Chair Facer explained that all the drafted maps are posted to the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission website and encouraged the public to open those and give comments on them. He stated that the commissioners would work to implement comments received as soon as they started mapping again the following week.

Commissioner Hillyard then spoke about the importance of remaining within the allowed population deviances, both to avoid potential legal action as well as keeping other districts balanced. His example was that if three districts are 500 people over the ideal, you need either three districts 500 people under the ideal, or one district 1500 people under, and so keeping the numbers as close to the ideal as possible makes mapping the later districts easier. He further explained that while maintaining population numbers can result in some arbitrary decisions, comments from the public would greatly help in ensuring those decisions are not negatively impactful.

Commissioner Hale referred to Chair Facer's earlier point that the commissioners had decided to ignore political data. She spoke regarding a recent critique she had heard regarding a drafted map she had worked on as favoring one party. She explained that because the commissioners did not have that data, there was no intentional favoring or disfavoring.

Chair Facer then noted that in addition to the commissioners in attendance, Commissioner Thorne and Commissioner Bishop were both attending virtually. He explained that three commissioners were appointed by the Republican Legislative Leadership, Commissioners Hillyard, Bishop, and Baker and that three were appointed by the Democratic Legislative Leadership, Commissioners Durham, Hale, and Thorne. Chair Facer explained that Commissioner Baker and Commissioner Thorn are independent of any party and that Chair Facer himself was appointed by the Governor.

Chair Facer then explained that the various mapping teams had been created to avoid having both democrats or republicans on the same team and that the commissioners were committed to working cooperatively and that that cooperative effort had been a great success thus far.

IV. Presentation: City Leadership Delegations

Chair Facer then asked if any city leadership was in attendance. He noted no leadership in attendance but explained that there were other events occurring in the community that weekend.

V. Presentation: Public Comment – Joey Fica

Chair Facer then turned the time to Joey Fica to present on the commission website uirc.utah.gov and how the public can use the website to submit comments. Joey explained how the public can submit communities of interest, full maps, and written comments. Tutorials and links to these resources can be found at uirc.utah.gov.

Commissioner Baker then explained that when mapping, the commissioners have access to census data, geographic data, and community of interest data. He asked the public to help submit communities of interest to fill that data layer and help the commissioners to make the most informed decisions.

Chair Facer expressed his thankfulness for comments received from the public previously and explained the commissioner's dedication to using those comments to inform their mapping.

VI. Presentation: Public Hearing Format – Gordon Haight

Gordon then explained the format for giving public comments, including a general five-minute time limit.

VII. Open Public Comment

Chair Facer then turned the time to the public for comments, beginning with some individuals that had expressed a desire to comment during the open house portion of the meeting.

Rob Lathem then addressed the commissioners. He first acknowledged the institutional knowledge present in the commission, and noted that several commissioners are lawyers. Rob explained that he had worked on various political campaigns and voting reform efforts for years. His comments then focused on

the possibilities of looking into and using multimember districts. He ended his comments by asking how incarcerated individuals are counted in Utah.

Commissioner Hillyard responded that the complications with how to count incarcerated individuals are also seen with other populations such as servicemembers. He also discussed how multimember districts might interact with racial concerns.

Chair Facer then responded to the question regarding counting incarcerated individuals and explained that in Utah they are counted in the prison they reside during the census, but other states count them in their home address. He also explained that census data this year had been delayed. He then asked Matt Cannon, Utah Independent Redistricting Commission Legal Counsel, if there was anything else to note regarding prison populations.

Matt responded that Chair Facer's response was accurate and so far, only a few states operated differently.

Benjamin Fica then addressed the commissioners. His comments focused on the current House Districts and the way in which they split Washington City into two districts, joining one half of the City with Hurricane rather than the other half of the City. He suggested that the commissioners work to keep all of Washington City within the same house district.

Pat Jones then addressed the commissioners. Her comments focused on some questions regarding the changes that Washington County seemed likely to see with the latest census numbers, and how many districts would be within Washington County.

Commissioner Hillyard answered and explained that Washington County had enough population for four house districts, but there would be approximately 8,000 people from Washington County that would need to be in a district with another county. He noted that for Senate seats there would be approximately 70,000 people from Washington County in another County. He asked the public for help in understanding where to place these 8,000 and 70,000 people for their respective districts.

Pat Jones then further addressed the commissioners, mentioned both a perceived natural boundary of I-15, and mentioned that certain neighborhoods in Washington County seemed to be composed largely of second homes rather than primary residences.

Commissioner Durham explained that the various criteria mentioned early interest in different ways, and that communities of interest also have to be balanced with contiguous districts, even if two areas are very similar they do need to be contiguous to go into the same district.

Commissioner Hale explained some details relating to the timeline, noting that the Utah Independent Redistricting Commission would be submitting maps to the legislature on November 1. She noted the need for public input, but also that because of timeline constraints, the input was needed expeditiously.

Chair Facer explained that a primary goal of the commission is to assist the Legislature, ideally by having one of their maps approved, but also by helping shape the conversation and giving information from the public to the Legislature.

Commissioner Hillyard then asked some more specific questions regarding how the public would like to see congressional maps created. He explained that one possible option with the population numbers would be to have Washington County in a district with Cache County and San Juan County. He then explained that some counties had expressed less interest in a map like that however. He mentioned several possible approaches to creating maps, but asked the public for some advice on how maps could be created with general approaches.

Pat Jones then addressed the commissioners. Her comments focused on her perception that there are more similarities between Washington and Iron Counties than with Kane or San Juan Counties.

An audience member thanked the commissioners for their work and Chair Facer echoed this comment.

Commissioner Baker then asked a clarifying question to Benjamin Fica regarding how Washington City is split. Benjamin clarified the desire to avoid splitting Washington City.

Rob Lathem addressed an earlier comment from Commissioner Hillyard regarding the possibility of creating nesting districts with five house districts being contained within each of the 15 school board districts. He commented on the relationship between nesting districts and multi member districts and also explained some recent developments in San Juan County regarding how they elect their county commissioners.

Commissioner Hillyard mentioned the commissioners had made efforts to keep Native American populations together in response to the discussion of the San Juan County elections.

An audience member asked about keeping communities of interest together and the pros and cons of putting a community of interest within only one district.

Commissioner Durham responded, discussing some worries from rural communities in having their voices heard. She also discussed that there may be communities that would be interested in having some representation in several districts to reach a larger group of policy makers. Commissioner Durham explained that there weren't necessarily any hard and fast rules on how communities of interest can be used and public input can help shape the discussion for both individual communities and the usage of communities overall.

Commissioner Hillyard suggested that when people submit communities of interest they consider what communities they might like to be joined with if the community is fewer than a full district.

VIII. Close Public Comment

Chair Facer asked for any additional comments and absent any requests he closed the public comment section.

Chair Facer then asked for any further comments from commissioners.

Commissioner Baker explained some of the organization and categorization process for using communities of interest. An audience member asked if any communities were weighed any higher than others and Commissioner Baker explained that they were not.

Commissioner Durham thanked Commissioner Baker for his expertise. She also encouraged people to watch part of a mapping session to better understand the various issues discussed.

Commissioner Bishop emphasized that the commissioners were not in competition with the Legislature. He encouraged members of the public to reach out to their state representatives and members of the Legislative Redistricting Committee as they will have the final decision.

Commissioner Hillyard made a few final remarks regarding the avoidance of political data and how race can be used to remain in legal compliance.

IX. Adjourn

Chair Facer thanked the audience and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Durham motioned to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 PM.